



friendship force  
WISCONSIN - MADISON



[ffwis.org](http://ffwis.org)

MAY 2021

## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was great to see so many of you at our annual meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>! We made the most of the Zoom gathering with pre- and post-meeting social time. Our special guest Dale Moore, Friendship Force Midwest Field Representative, updated us about FFI changes designed to enhance the focus on Friendship Force's mission, embodied in the return to a previous tag line: "A World of Friends is a World of Peace." A FFI website refresh focuses on prospective members and will be translated into more than its current eight languages. Members are encouraged to set up a personal account at [my.friendshipforce.org](http://my.friendshipforce.org), which will link you to a new secure website accessible only to members.

FFI is looking forward to resuming journeys later this year! We are enthused with our club's journey matches for 2022. Read more about our journey planning in this issue of the newsletter. While we maintain our strong focus on inbound and outbound journeys, our other activities also continue to support our mission to promote cultural understanding and friendship around the world!

Bylaws changes passed by the membership in 2020 moved our leadership and committee rotation forward from September to July. Our July board meeting will include both current board and committee chairs and those who will succeed them. Succession planning is important for us to remain vital as a club creating a world of friends and a world of peace!

I encourage you to consider volunteering for an active role in the club. It's a great way to learn more about Friendship Force, show your support, and get to know other chapter members. Resources developed by FFI and our club over the years provide a framework to develop and support club leadership. Our current leaders also will provide helpful guidance and even possible overlap to help new leaders in their roles.

Healthy volunteer organizations rotate responsibilities among their memberships to tap varied talents and interests and invigorate the organization with fresh ideas and energy! Contact me or a current committee chair to talk about how you can get involved, and any interest that you may have in a leadership position now or in the future.

Kathy Speck

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Monthly Board Meeting:

The FFI Madison Board meets VIRTUALLY on the second Wednesday of the month @ 12:30 pm

May 5: Puerto Rico Conversations. "Programs"

May 6: Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup>. "Activities"

May 13: Governor's Island Bike Ride. "Activities"

May 19: Trivia Night. "Programs"

May 24: Book Club. "Activities"

May 25: Bike Ride. "Activities"

May 27: Second Harvest. "Activities"

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Please check our Wisconsin – Madison website ([ffwis.org](http://ffwis.org)) for any additions, updates or corrections to event schedules during the month, and keep an eye out for email updates as well. We don't want you to miss anything!

Now that we seem to live on ZOOM, we remind you that ZOOM support is available from FFI and from our club.

View the FFI Zoom training video at

<https://vimeo.com/436845540>.

Or Contact Peter Kaufman [pkaufman@gmail.com](mailto:pkaufman@gmail.com)



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## JOURNEYS



### *NOW WE KNOW WHERE and HERE IS HOW*

At our Annual Meeting we learned about our incoming and outgoing adventures for the remainder of 2021 and 2022. FFI has given us more latitude in scheduling for the Journeys, to give Ambassadors as many opportunities as possible to make up for lost excursions.

However, due to greater scheduling flexibility, coordinating and planning may be somewhat more complicated than in previous years, so we need more help than normal in terms of volunteers to make these experiences happen.

Put on your traveling hat and shoes and PLEASE contact Stephanie Sorensen at (608) 819-6646 or [ssorensen268@gmail.com](mailto:ssorensen268@gmail.com) ASAP and tell her what you are willing and able to do. If you are interested in a particular destination becoming a Journey Coordinator/planner may give you more input into scheduling the travel and designing the activities. The sooner you communicate with Stephanie the better.

### 2021 Incoming

#### Global Bike Journey in the Fall.

In terms of planning time Fall is not that far off! However, our Journey Coordinator for this event went back to work so we need a volunteer to continue to coordinate the remainder of the planning and lead the planning committee. Much of the work for this has been done - bike routes and Ambassadors have been chosen. Most Ambassadors plan to drive and bring their bikes. We made a deposit on a site for a welcome dinner, and since it is biking, most activities are outdoors.

### 2021 Outgoing

#### Dallas TX

We need two Journey Coordinators to make this happen. This visit could be scheduled in the fall, winter, or early spring. It is an interesting city and perhaps attractive in the winter.

## JOURNEYS

#### Niagara in the Fall

This journey is in our calendar. However, we need to monitor the currently closed Canadian borders as well as vaccination progress in Canada. We need two Journey Coordinators to monitor the situation and to lead this adventure. If you are interested in visiting the area and would consider leading this, please contact our Journey Manager, Stephanie Sorensen.

### 2022 Incoming

#### Tweed Valley AUS

We will host Tweed Valley, Australia, probably in the Spring or Fall, as a reciprocal visit from our recent visit to Australia. They also have asked us to find and recommend another destination for them in the summer. We are looking for Journey Coordinators provide a memorable experience for these Ambassadors.

### 2022 Outgoing

#### New Caledonia and New Zealand

Our canceled Journey to New Caledonia and New Zealand has been reassigned to us for 2022. Dan Eggerding and Maureen Kind are the Journey Coordinators. Please contact Stephanie Sorensen first if you are still or newly interested in traveling as an Ambassador. Travel will probably be in the Spring or Fall.

#### Toronto

Another Journey has been assigned to us to Toronto – possibly in early summer. There are no time changes or long overseas flights, etc. Toronto has much to offer. Two Journey Coordinators are needed for this visit.

### Travel Safety Issues

With respect to COVID safety, we will always follow CDC and local guidelines in place at the time of travel. We will require every Host and Ambassador from our club to be vaccinated and will ask anyone visiting us to also be vaccinated.

We have many members who can offer advice and guidance on how to manage this effort. Stephanie Sorensen has an excellent manual for your reference. Contact her at (608) 819-6646 or [ssorensen268@gmail.com](mailto:ssorensen268@gmail.com)

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## JOURNEYS

### *OITA JAPAN VIRTUAL REUNION*

In the Fall of 2018, fifteen Madison Friendship Force ambassadors flew to Japan to be hosted by Friendship Force chapters in Aichi and Oita prefectures. The enriching experiences with our kind, delightful hosts resulted in many ongoing friendships and continuing contacts with both clubs.

We welcomed a group of Aichi ambassadors to Madison in the Fall of 2019. A few weeks ago, in a virtual reunion with the Oita club, our Madison ambassadors enjoyed a live view of spring cherry blossoms and Samurai "warriors" at Oka castle, as well as a song about Japanese cherry blossoms. Madison ambassadors shared favorite memories of Japan and photos of our lives in Madison. Oita club said they thoroughly enjoyed their first experience with a group Zoom session, and they hope to visit us in Madison in the near future. In the meantime, Kathy Speck will provide an opportunity for her hosts' grandchildren to practice their English, as they share photos and stories of their home lives in another Zoom session.

How we made contact:

The view from Oita

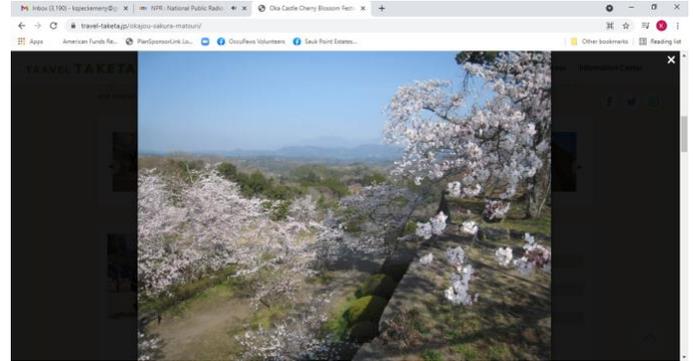


A Samurai reenactor



## JOURNEYS

A live screen shot of cherry blossoms in the rain from Oita



## ACTIVITIES

### *ADOPT A HIGHWAY*

On **Wednesday, April 7**, at 10:00 am, group met at the Middleton park-and-ride lot off Highway 12 at exit 249 to clean up trash along the roadway. A group of seven members participated.

The highlight of the day was a lovely lady who stopped on Highway 12 to give our intrepid workers cold soda, peanuts, and cookies! She said that she had done highway cleanup for many years with the Prairie du Sac Lions Club. This sweet lady made everyone's day.

Our wonderful supporter is in the middle between Helen Ann Rugowski and Helen's friend



We will be back in the Fall to restart our highway cleanups.

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## ACTIVITIES

### BOOK CLUB



On **May 24 at 7:00 pm** members will discuss: Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi. This novel traces the lives of two sisters in Guyana in the early 1800's. One is married to a wealthy Englishman and the other is sent to America as a victim of the slave trade. The book follows 300 years of the histories of Ghana and America through the lives of the sisters and their descendants.

The book is available at the public library. Email Reta Harring at [retaharring@charter.net](mailto:retaharring@charter.net) if you want to attend. We are still meeting via ZOOM

On **April 26 at 7:00 pm** fifteen readers had a spirited and wide-ranging discussion of "The Lost City of the Monkey God" by Douglas Preston. All agreed that it was a book about much more than a search for a lost city in the Honduran rain forest, well-written and a good read.

### BIKING

The bike group has a number of consistent riders but welcomes others to join in. They schedule one or two rides a month May through October and will continue with "Pop-up," rides (on short notice when weather forecast is good.)

#### **Scheduled Rides:**

Governor's Island Ride - Thursday, May 13th at 10 A.M  
(rain date - Friday, May 14th)

The ride will follow bike paths and side streets from Olbrich Park through Madison and Maple Bluff to Governor's Island near Mendota Health Center. On the return, riders will stop for lunch at Banzo's on Sherman Ave. The ride is approximately 15 miles, mostly flat with a few hills.

Interested riders should contact Jan Hornback by May 10th for specifics @ 608-216-4454 or [hornback@wisc.edu](mailto:hornback@wisc.edu)

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## ACTIVITIES

### BIKING

EPIC Bike Ride - Tuesday, May 25th at 10 A.M. (rain date is Friday, May 28th)

Riders will take an epic ride on the Military Ridge State Trail to and around the EPIC Campus. On the return trip, they will stop in Verona for a bite to eat. Part of the ride is on paved trail/road and part is on crushed gravel. The distance is approximately 18 miles, with a shorter option, and mostly flat. If you are interested in joining this ride, please let Jan Hornback know by May 21st for specifics.

#### "Pop-up" Rides

Rides that come about, with short notice, for a beautifully forecasted day

Six riders enjoyed the first "pop-up" ride on April 16th from Olin Park to McFarland. The day was perfect for the ride and the group spotted owls, hawks, and various waterfowl on the trip, with a great lunch stop at the McFarland House.



Let Jan Hornback know if you want to be notified of "pop-up" rides. She will put you on her list. Contact Jan at: 608-216-4454 (phone/test) / [jhornback@wisc.edu](mailto:jhornback@wisc.edu)

### LET'S WALK LET'S HIKE

On April 2, six walkers enjoyed a nice walk again, this time in the Graber Pond Nature Preserve of Middleton, and the surrounding neighborhood. It was a cool and sunny day for a slow relaxed walk with plenty of time to chat. Since most walkers had been vaccinated, masks were optional for the first time in exactly one year!

We are not walking in May since Magdi Sebestyen is out of town, but stay tuned for June walk announcements in our Newsletter.

## ACTIVITIES

### SECOND HARVEST FOODBANK



Our service project at the **Second Harvest Foodbank** will be on **Thursday, May 27, from 12:30 to 3:30 pm at 2802 Dairy Drive**. Our jobs may involve packing merchandise and fresh foods provided by grocery stores and farms to distribute to individuals and families who live in sixteen counties in southwestern Wisconsin. While we enjoy fun, fellowship, and laughter with each other, we also derive deep satisfaction by knowing that our efforts play an important role in filling basic food needs of many members of our community. We are in this together.

Let leader Lois Schulz ([loisschulz1942@gmail.com](mailto:loisschulz1942@gmail.com)) know of your interest by May 25.

Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin is a hunger-relief charity organization whose goal is to make sure people in southwestern Wisconsin have enough of the right kinds of food to live a happy and healthy life. They distribute millions of pounds of food each year through partner agencies and programs and help people in our community understand and apply for government food programs.

### DINING ON THE 6<sup>th</sup>

Time to enjoy each other's company in the spring outdoor weather! On **Thursday May 6** members will gather at the Daisy Café and Cupcakery, 2827 Atwood Avenue, Madison at 11:15 a.m. to enjoy company and conversation in a welcoming outdoor setting.

Daisy Café has cheery red umbrella picnic tables that seat four people each in their parking lot. We will place individual orders and pay the cashier at an outdoor register. Food will be prepared indoors and delivered to us at our tables. Daisy's menu is at: [www.daisycafeandcupcakery.com](http://www.daisycafeandcupcakery.com). Meal cost is approximately \$10.50 to \$12.

Please make your reservation with Gail Holmes by Wednesday May 5 at: [glholmes@wisc.edu.wi](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu.wi) / phone 608-249-1846.

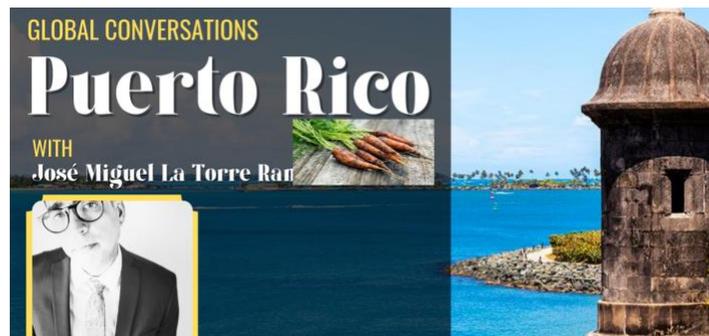
It is preferable for everyone to be vaccinated so we keep our gathering as safe as possible. But in any event, face masks can be work when not eating and drinking.

## PROGRAMS

### GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS

We are continuing our offerings of Global Conversations in collaboration with the Global Connections program of Pennsylvania State University.

On May 6, we will ZOOM this program at 6 pm CST/7 pm EST:



Jose Miguel La Torre Ramos is from Puerto Rico and is studying at Penn State to receive a Masters in International Affairs and has a Doctorate in Philosophy from InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico. He wants to study and defend the right to education, health, and decent work as a human right. He is a member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Student Advisory Group at the Penn State School of International Affairs.

To receive your Zoom invite to the event please register at the following link:

<https://globalconnections.wildapricot.org/event-4194390>

### TRIVIA NIGHT



Following the success of the first Trivia Night in February, our Programs Committee has created another fun and challenging evening of trivia on May 19 from 4:30 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M.

Twenty-four people participated in the February Trivia Night. There was a lot of laughter and silliness and occasional correct answers, and we expect more of the same on May 19! To register for the event, please contact Mike Lambert at: [lambertmichaelj@gmail.com](mailto:lambertmichaelj@gmail.com)

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## PROGRAMS

### HMONG CULTURAL EVENT

**Part 2** was presented on April 16 and was attended by over 20 people. The two speakers, cousins Xue and Houa Vang, talked about their own lives. Using old photographs from Laos, they introduced us to their family members, the way they lived, farmed, and made money in a small mountain village. Interestingly, the most valuable form of money were silver bars, even they also had coin currency.

The coins were used to decorate their clothes, so people actually “wore their wealth”. The wealthier one was, the more elaborate the coin decoration became on their clothes. Sadly, most of that wealth was lost when the families had to escape their villages at the end of the Vietnam War.

Much more painful was the loss of several family members during the Vietnam War in their grueling trek through the jungle and mountains to reach the Mekong River to cross into the relative safety of Thailand. Disease, starvation, or simply exhaustion took the lives of many. Thailand's refugee camps were safer, but lives were still lost due to diseases and malnutrition. Years later, the survivors were allowed to finally move to the US, where they had to face an extreme cultural shock.

Coming from an environment where there was no education, and no electricity and plumbing in houses, they had to learn to read and write, and to use everything modern life suddenly threw at them. (E.g., if nobody has ever shown you how to ignite the flames in the gas oven of your newly attained apartment, it can easily lead to an explosion.) They learnt how to manage, and eventually adapted to this new world. The life stories of Xue and Houa were heartbreaking and victorious at the same time, illustrated with lots of beautiful pictures, and lightened with humor and some happy memories.

### HMONG CULTURAL EVENT - THE NEXT GENERATION

Xue' Vang's daughter and son travelled to Laos in December 2019 to visit their parents' homeland.



Myzoom Vang wrote about her experiences and insights about the tragic history of her ancestral homeland during the Vietnam War and her emotions about the price the Hmong paid for their support of the U.S. during that time.

## PROGRAMS

### HMONG CULTURAL EVENT - THE NEXT GENERATION

Here are some of her thoughts:

*. . . . Growing up, I was upset that my parents didn't give me a 'white' name. Myzoom. Two English words put together. Americanized to help Americans be able to pronounce Maivzoo. Yet so many people still struggled with it. I was envious of kids who didn't have a weird name. Growing up, my parents pushed my siblings and me to assimilate to white culture, to speak only English so we wouldn't be put in ESL - to follow the 'American' way.*

*Growing up, I wished I was born white. Wished to have the same things as my white peers. Wished that I didn't need to add "Hmong" or "Asian" in front American. That I was simply just an American.*

*However, since college, I started to embrace my Hmong culture and my identity. Now, I'm embarrassed at how basic my Hmong is. Embarrassed at how late it took me to feel pride in my own culture and identity. Embarrassed at the lack of representation we have in US history.*

*This trip opened my eyes to how ignorant I was about the struggles and travesty people faced during the Vietnam War and the aftermath. I've heard stories, seen pictures, watched videos, but none of that prepared me to see it in person. To see how far my parents had to travel, on foot, to escape. . .*

*So, what if. . . the US and Vietnam didn't [disregard] the Geneva agreement that Laos was a neutral country? What if the US didn't drop bombs on Laos? What if the US didn't let the fear of Communism spreading get to them? What if my parents didn't have to run to Thailand to escape death and persecution? It's sad to realize that the reason why I am American, why I have so many rights and privileges, and why I am able to afford to travel and have so many opportunities is because of the Vietnam War, because the Hmong people sided with the Americans, because they were hunted like animals and became refugees after the Americans pulled out. It's sad to know that much of this history . . . will remain unacknowledged in US history and unknown to so many US citizens.*

*However, this is why I love to travel. Traveling and learning about different countries' histories and perspectives always reminds me to be grateful for what I have and that there are many sides to a story/past. I am fortunate for the life I have. . .*

*Overall, Laos is a beautiful country. It reminded me that you can be happy with less. You can be full with less. And there's so much joy in nature.*

## KNOW YOUR MEMBERS



Jennifer, Hank and Bambi

### **Jennifer Angelo and Hank Weiss: Finding Value in Reciprocal Relationships**

Jennifer and Hank discovered that welcoming visitors from other countries frequently leads to reciprocal, lasting relationships. Hosting and helping people from Thailand, Columbia, Turkey, and Costa Rica resulted in memorable trips and homestays in those countries.

Jennifer and Hank met and married in Madison. They honeymooned in Yugoslavia and Hungary and shared one of their early adventure stories. As naïve newlyweds, they traveled by train from Zagreb to Budapest. Not thinking about purchasing food before leaving on the trip or looking for the dining car, they arrived in Budapest after five-hours with empty stomachs. In the 1980s, only elegant restaurants were in train stations; they chose a very fancy one. With the help of a patient waitress, they attempted to translate the menu and order food, only to end up ordering two each of several dishes! As they commented, “Good thing we were starving! It turned out to be a wonderful and inexpensive meal!” Learning from early travel challenges and receiving help from kind strangers inspired Jennifer and Hank to continue traveling.

When Jennifer and Hank lived and worked in Pittsburgh, they met a family from Turkey through Hank’s work. Jennifer and Hank assisted the couple and their young son with translation needs, with navigating cultural differences, and with holiday rituals. When the Turkish couple was invited to a gala, Jennifer helped the wife shop in a second-hand clothing store for an appropriate but inexpensive gown. She and Hank organized an Easter egg hunt for the young son who knew only a few words of English. Jennifer and Hank took the family to Christmas celebrations. Because of Jennifer and Hank’s kindness and hospitality, the family asked them several times to visit their home in Turkey. When they travelled to Turkey, the family not only helped Jennifer and Hank experience daily life in Turkey and showed them around non-tourist places, but they also introduced them to yummy ice cream made from sheep’s milk and demonstrated how to bargain for a Turkish rug.

Homestays are just one of the ways Jennifer and Hank immerse themselves into another country and its culture.

## KNOW YOUR MEMBERS

Hank’s work as an epidemiologist took them to New Zealand for five years. As they commented, “Living, working, buying a house, paying taxes, and surviving an earthquake in New Zealand gave us real insights into what it is like to live in a very small, insular country.”

Jennifer and Hank returned to Madison five years ago for retirement, and, with encouragement from their neighbor, Sandi Wysock, joined Friendship Force-Wisconsin. Before the pandemic, the couple hosted Friendship Force visitors and took a trip to Costa Rica. They found that combining a bus tour with a homestay was a perfect way to visit a country. They not only benefitted from the expertise of tour guides but also from the insights of local residents.

Unlike many who found the pandemic restricting, Jennifer and Hank discovered that it offered an opportunity to return to their professions in occupational therapy and in public health. Although they enjoy their retirement jobs, they look forward to future travel. This summer they have a trip planned to Iceland with one of their daughters. They also hope to take trips in the United States. As more countries open to international visitors, Jennifer and Hank are planning to accept long-standing invitations from overseas friends.

## BOARD UPDATES

The July Board meeting will include new elected Board Members – with re-elected President Kathy Speck, Vice President Doug Johnson, and Treasurer Mary Juckem, and welcoming newly elected Secretary Sandy Drew.

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## **BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Standing Committee Chairs**

**Membership:** Lise R. Skofronick 608-274-7732

[liskofronick@gmail.com](mailto:liskofronick@gmail.com)

**Journey Manager:** Stephanie Sorensen 608-819-6646

[ssorensen268@gmail.com](mailto:ssorensen268@gmail.com)

**Activities:** Gail Holmes 608-249-1846 [glholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu)

**Outreach:** Dorothy Baldwin 608-742-6493

[janddbaldwin@gmail.com](mailto:janddbaldwin@gmail.com)

**Communications:** Sandi Wysock 608-833-5326

[sandrawysock@msn.com](mailto:sandrawysock@msn.com)

### **Program :**

Mike Lambert (608)-577-1057

[lambertmichaelj@gmail.com](mailto:lambertmichaelj@gmail.com)

Magdi Sebestyen (608)-213-5768

[magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com](mailto:magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com)

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## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ACTIVITY LEADERS**

Leaders for specific activities are:

Let's Hike/Let's Walk–Magdi Sebestyen

([magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com](mailto:magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com))

Winter Snow-Shoeing/Cross-Country Skiing--Tamas

Gaal ([tgaal@wisc.edu](mailto:tgaal@wisc.edu))

Second Harvest Food Bank–Lois Schulz

([loisschulz1942@gmail.com](mailto:loisschulz1942@gmail.com))

Travel/Day trips–Donna Hussin ([djhussin@yahoo.com](mailto:djhussin@yahoo.com))

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ACTIVITY LEADERS**

### **Activities Committee Members:**

Gail Holmes (chair) ([glholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu)),

Audrey Liimatainen ([AMCL822@yahoo.com](mailto:AMCL822@yahoo.com)),

Lois Schulz ([loisschulz1942@gmail.com](mailto:loisschulz1942@gmail.com))

Leaders for specific activities are:

Adopt-A-Highway–Stephanie Vanden Bush

([sljacobs2@gmail.com](mailto:sljacobs2@gmail.com))

Bike Rides – Jan Hornback ([jhornback@wisc.edu](mailto:jhornback@wisc.edu))

Book Club – Reta Harring ([retaharring@charter.net](mailto:retaharring@charter.net)) and

Marian Ehrenberg ([marianeh2014@gmail.com](mailto:marianeh2014@gmail.com))

International Institutes–Helen Ann Rugowski

([haharrin@hotmail.com](mailto:haharrin@hotmail.com))

Let's Eat Out (LEO)–Bobbie Vrooman

([bobbiesque@gmail.com](mailto:bobbiesque@gmail.com))

Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup> – Gail Holmes ([glholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu))

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